Introduction: Modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta

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Tamil Saivism (*caivam, caiva camayam*)[1] is a worldwide reality at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Expressions of Tamil Saivism can not only be found in South India and Sri Lanka, but also all across the globe in Tamil-speaking communities. There exist numerous organizations for the spread of Tamil Saivism and its supposed 'core philosophy' Saiva Siddhanta (*caiva cittāntam*, Skt. *śaiva siddhānta*) in South India, South-East Asia, Europe, South Africa, and North America. Their advocates situate themselves decidedly within a broader tradition called 'Hinduism' and even assert that they are its only true and universal heir. However, Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta and their controversial claims hardly feature in the scholarly and religious discourse on Hinduism (a highly contested term itself, of course!). These Tamil traditions are mostly presented as vernacular and regional matters on the fringes of a normative and global (Vedic/Brahmanical) Hinduism and its hegemonic discourses.

The goal of this special issue, though, is not to assign the Tamil tradition a more prominent, or even 'classical' place within the discourse on Hinduism. It is, instead, to raise questions about the concrete and contingent history of the present globality. Tracing these questions will inevitably lead to a critical engagement with the immediate, i.e. modern, history of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta. This focus will unveil the entangled and global character of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta, being part and parcel of global religious history, at least since the nineteenth century. In order to understand the intricate entanglements of historical contingency, it is thus necessary to broaden the scope of this issue to both the older and also more recent contexts of Tamil history as well. By taking the modern developments and dynamics seriously, the case studies presented here will offer fresh perspectives into the understanding of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta. Furthermore, these historical approaches which are open to ambiguities, contradictions and global entanglements, in turn challenge normative (and ahistorical) narratives of 'Hinduism' in general.

Studying Modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta

There appears to be a noticeable imbalance in Tamil and religious studies with regard to the temporal focus of research. While we find a comparatively high

number of very valuable and rich studies on the 'classical' Tamil Saiva textual tradition, a general lack of historical investigation into modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta is more than evident.[2] The question of whether a categorical distinction between 'classical' and 'modern' eventually proves to be meaningful is open for discussion. The same could be said about the applicability of the term 'Saivism' (as used today) as well, especially in a pre-modern context (see for example Schalk 2013). Moreover, it seems that the majority of existing studies on Tamil Saivism remain untouched by the encounter or entanglement of Tamil religious culture with global modernity in the nineteenth century. This is extremely striking vis-à-vis the broader picture of historical analysis with regard to the modern history of Hinduism.

The importance of formations of modernity has been widely acknowledged for the religious history of South Asia and Hinduism in particular. It has become commonly accepted – especially due to important postcolonial interventions (see for example King 1999) – that India's religious traditions have been (and still are) subject to processes of constant innovation, transformation and creative re-iteration. The discussion of these dynamics has led to fruitful debates about the reshaping of religious traditions and has brought about conceptualisations like 'modern Hinduism', 'neo-Hinduism', 'reform-Hinduism', or the idea of the 'invention of Hinduism' in the light of colonialism and orientalism. The way the world speaks about Hindu religion today is inextricably linked to global discourses on religion and ritual fuelled by European and American missionaries, colonial administrators, orientalist scholars, Indian intellectuals, Hindu reformers, and religious activists since the nineteenth century. Their encounters, debates and contestations resulted in the understanding of 'Hinduism' as a more or less unified world-religion. It remains, however, a vigorous point of discussion whether, and to what extent the modern and indeed globalised situation of colonial encounter and intellectual entanglement has influenced Indian traditions – or even brought them about in the way they are represented today. It obviously makes a difference whether we term the noticeable historical processes as 're-configuration', 'modernization', 'standardization', or 'invention'. The important argument here though, is that these issues of modernity have been extensively debated with regard to normative (Vedic/Brahmanical) Hinduism, but have hardly been addressed with respect to traditions like Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta. The five articles in this volume will deal with different aspects of this issue. Nevertheless, the contributions attach crucial significance to the modern situation in Tamil religious history, an importance that this period has already received in the historiography of Hinduism.

The Silence on Modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta

The relative lack of historical assessments of modern Tamil Saiva history, however, cannot be fully explained by its neglect in the dominant academic and Hindu

discourses on religion. At least three highly intertwined reasons for the silence on modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta can be identified: (1) a disregard for the literary production of the nineteenth (and twentieth) century, (2) a shared (religious and academic) focus on continuity and search for authoritative origins, and (3) a teleological and mostly political narrative in the historiography of modern Tamil Nadu.

Firstly, there has been a persistent tendency in Tamil studies to frame that period as the paradigmatic 'dark ages' of Tamil cultural history. This has particularly become apparent within the traditional sphere of Tamilology, namely literary and language studies (Ebeling 2010). Ironically, the traditional inattention towards the literary production of the nineteenth century has gone hand in hand with a strong narrative of the 'rediscovery' of classical Tamil texts, i.e. 'Sangam-poetry', that led influential Tamil scholars to name the period that saw the publication of those supposedly forgotten texts as the 'Tamil Renaissance' (Zvelebil 1974; Ramanujan 1985). Without a doubt these developments resulted in the crucial reshaping of the understanding of Tamil as a classical language and of its canon (Venkatachalapathy 2012). The very idea of a literary renaissance, however, favours what is considered to be classical over what is contemporary. Therefore, the importance of the nineteenth century, which also witnessed the 'discovery' of the Dravidian language family, has at least partly been recognised – although primarily in terms of its supposed recovery of a glorious past. Thus, we are confronted with the paradoxical situation that, on the one hand, the modern processes of the nineteenth century are still widely considered to fall into the 'dark ages' that are only a deficient version of a classical literary period, while on the other hand, it is evident that it was this time that brought about the very idea of a Tamil classical age and its true literary sources. Whereas the narratives of rediscovery and renaissance have been heavily criticised on various grounds in recent scholarship (Tieken 2010; Rajesh 2014; Wilden 2014), the implications and findings of this critique have hardly been utilised for the study of Tamil religious history in general and Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta in particular.

This is related to the second reason for the silence on modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta, namely the prevalent focus on continuity (and a 'true origin') in Saiva and academic discourse. The emphasis on continuity is, of course, hardly surprising within the religious context itself. Traditional institutions and popular activists quite naturally stress the divine origin of Tamil Saivism as Siva's own teachings, i.e. the philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta. These teachings, as well as the practices deduced from it, are very clearly considered to be direct revelations by the one true god Siva. He is supposed to have taught the Saiva Siddhanta precepts to his (mythical) disciples on Mount Kailash (*kayilai malai*, Skt. *kailāśa*) before time immemorial. In this traditional view, the original divine doctrines in Sanskrit, i.e. the *Vedas* (*vētam*, Skt. *veda*) and *Siva-Agamas* (*civākamam*, Skt. *śiva āgama*), were then later articulated in Tamil in what is considered to be the classical Saiva *bhakti* canon, namely the hymns of the *Twelve Tirumurai* (*paṉṉiru tirumuṟai*). Whereas

today those divinely inspired songs are interpreted to represent poetic and impli-
cit expressions of the 'completion/established conclusion of Saivism' (that is what
'Saiva Siddhanta' is traditionally translated as), the later Tamil *Saiva Siddhanta
Sastras* (*caiva cittānta cāttiraṅkaḷ*, alternatively *meykaṇṭa cāttiraṅkaḷ*) (12th–14th cen-
turies) are understood to be the explicit philosophical formulations of the original
divine truth or wisdom (for standard accounts, see for example Dhavamony 1971
and Sivaraman 1973). In the contemporary Saiva Siddhanta discourse, we can find
also some other works that are supposed to convey this truth. Depending on the
institutional or ideological background of those propagating Tamil Saiva
Siddhanta, this can include the *Tirukkural* (*tirukkuṟaḷ*) and textual traditions of
orthodox monastic centres (i.e. Saiva Maths and Adhinams), as well as heterodox
works from outside of the established canon (for one prominent and disputed
example, see Raman in this volume). What unites those religious interpretations
is, however, that all of them converge in the conviction that the original divine
truth, since its having been revealed by Siva, was continuously transmitted
through an unbroken line of saints and philosophers. The modes of expression,
and even their very medium, might have differed historically, but the original
divine teaching remains unchanged. While such strong emphasis on historical and
substantial continuity understandably appears within the global Tamil Saiva dis-
course, it is also obvious that a similar stance is widely shared in the scholarly
accounts of the topic (for a discussion, see Klöber in this volume).

   It has been mentioned above that, at least after the postcolonial intervention,
the historiographic contributions on Hinduism have resulted in taking into ac-
count the dynamics of modernity when scrutinising various Indian religious trad-
itions. The significant role of the global entanglement due to colonialism and
orientalism, particularly since the nineteenth century, has been acknowledged
for the present understanding of Hinduism. However, when it comes to the sup-
posedly regional or vernacular matter of Tamil Saivism, the common scholarly
pre-assumption appears to be somewhat different. Whilst ascribing an important
role to modern developments with regard to the reshaping and reconfiguration of
Vedic Brahmanical tradition, general introductions to Hinduism, for example, tend
to suggest that modernity has not influenced South Indian Saivism substantially
(see Harlass, in this volume). The reason for this might be that, whereas
Brahmanical Hinduism is normally accepted to have been intertwined with mod-
ernity, Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta are regularly perceived as a particularly
non-Brahmin tradition and thus mostly aloof from those dynamics. This differen-
tiation is of course problematic, since the categorical Brahmin/non-Brahmin or
Aryan/Dravidian distinctions are themselves results of modern orientalist know-
ledge production. There are valuable contributions, like the path-breaking schol-
arship on pre-modern, pan-Indian Sanskritic Saiva Siddhanta by Dominic Goodall
(see for example, Goodall 2004), that challenge wide-ranging ahistorical concep-
tions of the intrinsic Tamil nature of Saiva Siddhanta that try to negate
Brahmanical or Sanskritic influence and even style it a 'Dravidian philosophy'

more recently (Christopher 2009). These studies rightly call for a more complex understanding of pre-modern Tamil Saivism (Pechilis Prentiss 1996; Ishimatsu 1999). However, the majority of scholarship on Tamil Saivism seems to have fallen into the trap of continuity by mostly ignoring modern processes and the social and cultural shifts of the nineteenth century – or claiming those were only shallow and not touching the heart of the religious matter. This is, in a way, close to the religious essentialism mentioned above. Academic Studies on Tamil Saivism do, of course, normally not assume a divine origin of the tradition and their textual expressions, but, more often than not, they invoke a sort of neo-classicism that downplays change, reform and innovation in favour of the integrity of classical texts and their meanings. A deeper look into the modern history of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta as intended in this volume, however, will demonstrate that this view not only misses out on fascinating stories, but runs into the danger of being ahistorical. This does not, of course, mean that we should not study pre-modern Saiva traditions but that we should not measure it against modern developments (see Steinschneider, in this volume).

   The third reason for the apparent silence on modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta has its roots in the general historiographical narrative on modern South India. The established focus on political history and thereby on the emergence and development of the Tamil nationalism, the Pure Tamil and Dravidian movement (see for example, Irschick 1969, 1994) has forcefully overshadowed the scholarly accounts of Tamil modernity. By way of teleologically reading modern Tamil history, including religious history, as a sort of pre-history to the political expressions of the (atheist/rational) Dravidian idea in the first half of the twentieth century, dynamics of earlier Saiva discourse are not only hidden, but also at times marginalised as 'incomplete', 'incoherent' or 'not yet' versions of the later conceptualisations of Tamil identity – this also proves true for Saivite articulations from outside South Asia (see Schröder, in this volume). This can be illustrated by the scholarly treatment of the vibrant reformist Saiva scene, their proponents and their discussions around 1900, recently termed the 'Saiva Siddhanta Revival' (Bergunder 2010; Nehring 2010; Vaithees 2015). Michael Bergunder has thus suggested that:

> '[t]his perspective regards the revival of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta, in the 19th and early 20th century, as a mere precursor of later Tamil nationalist and Dravidian movement. However, these developments only took on a clearer shape as late as 1916, when the Justice Party was founded and, at least according to common historiography, the Pure Tamil movement was established. Reading the whole Tamil Saiva renaissance, which started much earlier in the 19th century, against the background of these later developments makes it difficult to do justice to its complex and different identity positionings.' (Bergunder 2010, p. 31)

   It is, therefore, the explicit aim of this issue to offer perspectives into Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta that emphasise the dynamics of modernity in

religious history. All contributions share the common ideal of analysing their respective case studies in a strictly historical manner, so as to avoid the teleological and ahistorical pitfalls which led to the silence about modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta thus far. The articles might not always come to the same conclusion, but that is what makes this historical discussion fruitful after all.

Historicising modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta

From the 1990s onwards, Tamil Saiva Siddhanta has experienced a resurgence with regard to its public visibility (Klöber 2016). Since then, leading traditional Saivite institutions in Tamil Nadu have launched wide-ranging study programmes to educate the Tamil people in their 'original' religion, popular organisations have been founded for the spread or – depending on the viewpoint – preservation of Saivism and religious festivals. Moreover, conventions and conferences are held all over the Tamil-speaking world. Whether in Chidambaram or Jaffna, Singapore or Durban, London or Toronto, Tamil Saiva activists are expressing formulations of a supposedly dwindling Tamil identity in terms of and with a strong connection to the genuinely Tamil tradition of Saiva Siddhanta. These notions are even strengthened by the increasing possibilities of communication and the mobility of individuals. At the 'Second World Tirumurai Festival and Research Conference' (*iraṇṭāvatu ulaka-t tirumuṟai-p peruviḻāvum āyvu māṉāṭum*)[3] in London in September 2014, for example, the organising committee not only consisted of representatives from diaspora Saiva associations from Europe, North America, and South-East Asia, but also hosted several speakers from South India and Sri Lanka. In addition, the convention had invited influential figures from important South Indian Saivite monastic centres to bless and inspire the audience. Among those were a member of the ascetic brotherhood at the Dharmapuram Adhinam (*taramapuram ātīṉam*) and the 24th head of the Thiruvavaduthurai Adhinam (*tiruvāvaṭutuṟai ātīṉam*). Apart from being the supreme guest of honour, the latter dispensed certificates to British Tamils who had finished a study programme in Saiva Siddhanta, officially aligned with the respective Adhinam organisation in South India. The present of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta is a truly global and interconnected one. And it is this contemporary discourse emerging from and fuelled by this entanglement that necessarily has to mark the starting-point for any historical study into Tamil Saivism, or religion for that matter (Bergunder 2014).

It is a commonplace to note that, in order to understand a present situation, we have to study its history. And the immediate history of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta is undeniably and crucially modern. However, the reverse statement is true just the same. The assumption here is that we, as historians of religion, are inextricably embedded in today's discourses on religion and in turn Saivism, its generally accepted convictions and the tradition of scholarship on the matter. It is incredibly difficult to separate our current understandings and terminologies from our treatment of the past. With the intention to circumvent ahistorical,

universalist and essentialist readings of the Tamil Saiva tradition that are hardly equipped to do justice to historical constellations, it is imperative to start historicising Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta from and in the present (which is a historical context after all!). By changing the viewing direction in this manner, we might at least 'nourish the illusion of overcoming what the past has rendered insurmountable' (de Certeau 1992, pp. 11–12) as the proponent of this 'scriptural inversion' has called it. But even more simply, we may offer critical historical observations that uncover histories hitherto hidden and excluded from our attention, full of ambivalence, polyphony, and contestation. These are, as in the case of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta, most closely connected to the processes of modernity – regardless of whether we study contexts before, in or after the nineteenth century.

Five Perspectives on Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta

The idea to bring together essays on Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta arose from a panel entitled 'Changing Landscapes of Saiva Siddhanta: Transforming Tradition through Innovation' at the IAHR conference at Erfurt in 2015. The discussion about modern developments in Tamil Saivism has continued since then and resulted in the publication of this special issue. The five articles collected here offer different perspectives into historical processes and transformations in Tamil Saivism, mainly focusing on the modern period. One article, however, is decidedly exploring a much older historical context that is explicitly situated beyond the modern shifts.

 This first case study by Eric Steinschneider scrutinises a Saiva theological text called 'Olivilotukkam' (*Oḻiviloṭukkam*), allegedly from the fifteenth century. Steinschneider's contribution is particularly noteworthy within the premises of this issue, since it offers a valuable insight into a strand of the Tamil Saiva literary tradition that exemplifies the silencing character of the modern common-sense in Saiva discourse. The article starts with the critical observation that the modern narratives of Saiva Siddhanta since the revival phase around 1900 have portrayed Saiva Siddhanta in a manner that stresses monovocality and continuity over diversity, change, and possibilities of alternative and dissenting voices. Steinschneider, therefore, provides a close study of a late-medieval Saiva text. In his meticulous linguistic, rhetorical, and philosophical analysis of the *Olivilotukkam*, he presents a compelling picture of a text that – although aligning itself with the school of pre-modern Saiva Siddhanta – has not become part of the modern textual tradition, let alone the modern–classical canon, of Saiva Siddhanta. He argues that by historicising the treatise, i.e. taking it seriously within its own historical context and not reading it through the lens of later standardised narratives, we are able to get an idea of the ambivalent, contested, and dynamic nature of the pre-modern Tamil Saiva tradition. According to Steinschneider's analysis the *Olivilotukkam* has been left out of the modern common-sense because of its subversive character. It is particularly due to its ecumenical claims, its

critical remarks on Saiva doctrines and its playful rapprochement to the *Tirukkural* and particular Siddhar texts that the *Olivilotukkam* never found the way into the Saiva Siddhanta mainstream, but was later mainly received by heterodox figures of Tamil Saiva discourse.

One of these figures, the controversial and popular nineteenth century Saiva poet-saint Ramalinga Swamigal (1823–74), is the subject of Srilata Raman's contribution. In her analysis of what proves to be the one of the most exciting and wide-ranging contemporary public disputes in Tamil Saivism, Raman traces Ramalinga's textual and religious genealogy, his debated reception and particularly the modern context of the reception of his work. The article introduces the reader to this infamous contestation (known as *Aruṭupā-Maruṭpā* controversy) and its protagon-ists, one of whom was the influential lay Saiva activist Arumuga Navalar (1822–79). This highly polemicised controversy around the published poetry of Ramalinga and its claims of religious authenticity, as Raman persuasively argues, has to be studied against the backdrop of the modern dynamics in Tamil Nadu. These ex-plicitly included the innovative technological possibilities offered by the introduc-tion of print and the ideas of copyright and personal authorship. These thus resulted in new ways of thinking about religious texts and their authority. While critically scrutinising Arumuga Navalar's fierce public rejection of Ramalinga within an emerging modernist Saiva discourse, Raman is able to ex-pertly situate Ramalinga's literary trope of 'unlearnt knowing' (*ōtātu uṇartal*) within the pre-modern Saivite textual tradition. However, Arumuga Navalar, whose pedagogic Saiva activism formally adhered to orthodox positions within the framework of what came to be known as the classical Tamil Saiva canon, despised Ramalinga and his followers. By analysing these polemical debates, Raman's essay presents a strong historical case for the crucial significance of the nineteenth century in Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta. The article demon-strates that it was this modern period that, due to the new challenges of global modernity, saw a reconfiguration of the elite Saiva discourse, in the religious, cultural, and social sphere.

The contribution by Ulrich Harlass begins with the observation that Tamil Saivism has been strikingly neglected in the study of modern Hinduism. The essay indicates that scholarship on Hinduism shows the tendency to marginalise South Indian traditions as regional developments aloof from the processes of modernity. Whereas the historical work on (Vedic) Hinduism has spurred fruitful academic debates about the global character of Indian religion since the nine-teenth century and has led to conceptualisations like 'neo-Hinduism', 'reform-Hinduism', or even the 'invention of Hinduism', these discussions have hardly touched upon Saiva traditions beyond the Deccan. Harlass' article, thus, turns to one of the admittedly most crucial players in the global discourse on religion in general and Hinduism in particular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: theosophy. By scrutinising the reception of theosophical authors and their texts in the popular reformist Saiva journal 'Siddhanta Deepika', Harlass is

able to trace various connections between Tamil Saiva intellectuals of the time and their ideas about religion with a broader, indeed global discourse on religion. Therefore, he convincingly suggests that modern Tamil Saivism should be situated within a wider debate on modern (neo-)Hinduism, already established for other philosophical traditions.

In his article, Rafael Klöber aims to historicise the current Saiva Siddhanta discourse at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Starting from contemporary observations on how Saiva Siddhanta, the widely propagated 'core philosophy' of Tamil Saivism, is to be understood today, his analysis traces some crucial common-sensical (Saivite and academic) convictions of Saiva Siddhanta historically. By focussing on influential voices within the Tamil Saiva discourse, Klöber introduces the present-day historical positioning of traditional institutions and popular organisations that shape the dominant picture of Saiva history. He argues that these current representations of the Tamil Saiva tradition, if closely scrutinised, cannot be traced further back than the mid-nineteenth century, especially on a public scale. According to Klöber's study, the formation of the accepted textual canon falls into the same period, since it is only since then that the idea of Saiva Siddhanta as a classical Tamil philosophy was developed. Consequently, modern Saiva Siddhanta has to be considered as a product of the global entanglement of colonialism and orientalism.

The fifth and concluding paper in this special issue by Ulrike Schröder deals with an aspect of this modern global entanglement that has received hardly any attention in scholarship on Tamil Saivism, namely the Tamil community in South Africa. Therefore, her analysis proves to be of crucial importance to the wider aim of this volume by shifting the focus from the supposed heartland of Tamil Saivism, i.e. South India, to a global scale. Schröder's contribution is able to conclusively demonstrate that modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta was, right from the beginning, a global endeavour. The Tamil Indians in South Africa have participated in the emerging discourse on Indian religion from the late nineteenth century onwards. The article thus not only fills an obvious lacuna in this special issue, but also provides an expert historical study of the struggles for a particular Tamil (and Indian) identity in colonial and Apartheid South Africa. This Tamil identity arose within the dynamics of a racist government, social and ethnic contestation, and religious competition, especially in the early twentieth century. Schröder offers a thorough analysis of a leading reformist organization, the 'Saiva Sithantha Sungum' founded in 1937, that not only tried to counter Pentecostal proselytisation, but also developed a new 'diasporic' (and working-class) form of Tamil Saiva Siddhanta. It is due to the peculiar isolation of Apartheid South Africa that its Saivites were, for many decades, somewhat cut off from the traditional Saivite authorities of South India. This gap, however, is being bridged through intensifying contact after 1994. The global entanglement inherent to modern Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta can thus be traced in an admittedly unique historical context. Schröder's article, therefore, should not be seen as the exotic example from across

the Indian ocean, but moreover, as a case in point for the global and interwined character of Tamil Saivism, where notions of 'authenticity' and 'canonicity' are contested from the global margins.

The different stories told by the articles assembled in this special issue, ranging from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries, share a common assumption: namely, all contributions acknowledge and put emphasis on the crucial significance of the modern period of Tamil Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta. It is due to the dynamics, entanglements and indeed global processes of that time that the present general understanding of Tamil Saiva traditions was decisively shaped. Whether these developments resulted in the silencing of contested and ambivalent histories, marginal and hegemonic identity positionings or the appropriation of a classical canon, studying those modern configurations (and their contingent histories) not only proves highly fruitful, but also indispensable for a better understanding of the subject matter. The essays presented in the following volume, furthermore, concur that employing a distinctly historical approach to the respective cases is best suited to unveil hitherto hidden histories. Thereby, they deal with what has mostly been rendered 'preliminary', 'not yet', or 'marginal' in the history of Tamil Saivism in particular and offer a critical view towards problematising and rendering less hegemonic globally accepted narratives of 'Hinduism' in general.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1 Unless otherwise noted, transliterations of crucial terms in parenthesis are given in Tamil. The Sanskrit transliterations are only noted when deemed meaningful.

2 For notable exceptions, see Bergunder 2010, Nehring 2010, Raman 2004, 2011, 2013, 2014, Vaitheespara 1999, 2010, 2012, 2015, Weiss 2014, 2016.

3 The event was held between 19th and 21st of September 2014 at a local temple and a school-auditorium in South London. It was financed by several organisations from the UK and Malaysia. The main goal of the conference was to promote an understanding of the significance of the *Tirumurai*-hymns for the everyday life of Tamil Saivites. The convention offered a rich cultural and religious programme, talks by Tamil scholars and workshops aimed at convincing youngsters to identify with the Tamil Saiva tradition. For a detailed study of contemporary Saiva Siddhanta, including this conference, see Klöber 2016.